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HANDBOOK ON

PREPARING AN FSA EXHIBIT

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## PREPARING AN FSA EXHIBIT

So you want to prepare an FSA exhibit?

Just for a start let's say it's for a County Fair.

Perhaps it will be an entire FSA exhibit at the Fair, or one you are sharing with other USDA agencies.

Anyway, you haven't much time to spend on it, and you already know there's little or no FSA money to buy materials. Yet you want something attractive and worthwhile, because you know this Fair offers a good chance for people to find out what FSA borrowers are accomplishing in your county.

We'll start with the County Fair idea, although these suggestions should be as useful in fixing up something for your office, a store window, or a meeting.

### Make It a "One Idea" Display

Something simple will take less time and less money and, if well done, will be more effective than anything complicated or costly you could do. It's the idea that counts. The better the idea, the fewer aids you may need to present it. And one idea - one main idea - is enough. If you bring in other ideas, you will want to play them down so they point up, rather than compete with, your central theme. Otherwise, you'll confuse or bury the story you're trying to tell.

People at a Fair have a lot of other things to look at, as you know, so if you get across just one good thought, and firmly fix in their minds just one lasting impression of FSA, you'll be successful. The best tools for making an exhibit are your own imagination and ingenuity. Personal initiative, resourcefulness, and patience will get you further than anything else.

And don't worry for fear you'll turn out something that looks "homemade." An interesting localized exhibit--no matter how simply got up or put together--will attract more attention from the people you want to reach, than a slick artistic layout from Washington that doesn't tell about your own county's problems and how they're being solved. Something local just naturally means more to the folks around you than something remote or general.

### Selecting the Theme

In planning an exhibit, first carefully consider what information you want to get across. Maybe you have an outstanding food production record, or maybe the amount of food that women in FSA borrower families have canned and stored is exceptional. Or you may be proud of your county's group medical care program or sanitation work; if so, tell how medical attention for small farmers has increased, illness been reduced, infection prevented, number of deaths lowered, and so on.



It will be helpful to keep in mind the Administrator's statement in his letter of July 16:

"It's altogether proper that Farm Security be judged, and that its responsible employees, administrative and technical, be judged and rated, by the extent to which we measure up to the evident implications of the expression "supervised credit." Those implications are that beneficiaries of supervised credit farm better, live better, and make larger contributions to the welfare of their communities and their country than they did before they were supervised. There is just cause for pride in a service which achieves such results."

So in preparing an exhibit, you will want to show how borrowers are "farming better, living better, and making larger contributions to the welfare of your community than they did before they were supervised."

When first considering what you want to accomplish, perhaps write down the facts to be conveyed - so you can put them in logical order and refer to them as you work. After deciding on your idea, plan how you'll present it in a vivid, dramatic way. Since you'll be trying to inform people mostly about FSA work in your own community, slant your exhibit toward the problems that are uppermost in their minds. Consider timely local needs and make your results show how FSA is helping meet them. Try to emphasize some special undertaking or opportunity that interprets the program, select a feature that is helping build for postwar peace.

#### Ways for Developing the Theme

Although you may be able to think up better subjects of your own, the following are some topics you might use as main themes or sub-themes, singly or in combination with each other:

Small Farmers Produce Vital Food. Cut out pictures of farm products such as poultry, eggs, milk, pork, beef, and vegetables, and perhaps accompany them with figures on the increased production by local FSA families. If production figures for the past two years are available, show the comparison; or show the increase over years before families became FSA borrowers. Actual photographs of borrower families in the county, shown with their poultry, hogs, cows, gardens, or crops, would be effective.

Farming More Land and "Bigger Acres." Picture could show a farmer - who is renting or sharecropping more land - in field, with caption, "FSA borrowers in \_\_\_\_\_ county are operating \_\_\_\_\_ extra crop acres this year; or "No idle acres on FSA farms." Also can show pictures of lush crops, indicating "bigger acres" or increased yields from same land by better cultivation.

Teamwork Helps the Farmer. Pictures of farmers working together to overcome labor shortage as at harvest time, two or more farmers sharing equipment because of farm machinery scarcity, a livestock sire owned by several or more farmers, women using a pressure cooker or other canning equipment together, or other ideas.



Women and Children as "Farm Hands." Pictures of farm women and children working in fields, feeding livestock, milking cows, and doing other farm chores. Of course, actual photographs of local people are better than clipped pictures - but either will make good posters.

FSA Borrowers "Living-at-Home." Show pictures of gardens, orchards, smoke-houses, canned fruits and vegetables, stored foods, and other evidences of families "growing their own groceries." If possible, put some actual products on display - crediting the families who contributed them.

How Supervision Helps. Poster showing picture of supervisor and borrower family sitting around table, working out farm and home plan, checking record book, etc. with some such caption as "FSA farmers become good farm managers." The associate supervisor might be shown in kitchen demonstrating pressure canning, with words "FSA families increased their processing of homegrown foods in \_\_\_\_\_ county by \_\_\_\_\_ quarts last year (or this year over last). Might add pictures of vegetables or pictures of people working in gardens, with the underline "FSA gardens in \_\_\_\_\_ county averaged \_\_\_\_\_ acres in size this year.

Farming on a Business Basis. Good relations between tenants and landlords. Model lease pasted on a poster with the words, " \_\_\_\_\_ percent of \_\_\_\_\_ county's FSA borrowers now have written leases. Actual farm record book showing blanks for entries of farm income and expenses. Forms for making out annual farm and home plan, perhaps labeled, "Charting the Farm Family's Year in Advance."

Good Loan Repayment Records. With suitable pictures, can show figures for FSA repayments compared with matured debts in county. Maybe show pictures of FO farmers who have paid out about 35 or more years in advance, or who belong to "the \$1,000 club" because they've paid \$1,000 or more on their loans during the year. (In latter case, needn't mention actual amount paid, but the poster might carry borrowers' pictures with the underline, " \_\_\_\_\_ County's members of the \$1,000 Club, open only to farm families making payments of \$1,000 or more on their farm during the year.)

The Small Farmer's Patriotism. A patriotic appeal is always good, emphasizing the small farmers past contributions to the war effort and now building for peace time prosperity. Can use clipped pictures or photographs of farmer and members of family working to produce food, perhaps on way to market with load of hogs, fresh vegetables, etc. Using background of soldiers in uniform, can list names of a borrower's immediate family in armed forces. Can show pictures of people collecting scrap, turning in fat salvage, buying War Bonds, etc.

FSA Borrowers Help Fight Inflation. Pictures of farmers, or members of their families with War Bonds or stamps; farmers using ingenuity to repair farm machinery or farm buildings; a farm woman making clothing, remodeling coat or hat, making a divan from an old car seat or bedstead; children playing with homemade toys. Can represent family as self-sufficient on farm by growing their own food and livestock feed to avoid buying. Refer to payment of debts, advance repayments on Government loans, etc.



Better Living in Rural America. Might show pictures of happy, healthy people - a "rehabilitated" family perhaps at a bountiful table of food, or in living room or front yard of comfortable home. Could refer to the medical care program if active in county, with figures on local participation. Might show members of family taking part in community activities - attending meeting of Grange, Farmers' Union, or Farm Bureau; going to church, children busy on some 4-H Club project, and so on.

Special Topics. In your particular county or locality there may be a special FSA activity or service of interest to feature in an exhibit. For example, some water facility financed through FSA may be aiding families. Or if you are in a flood area, you may get good flood pictures and use them in connection with a statement about the number and amount of loans to stricken families.

Although posters are by no means the only items to be considered for an exhibit, they can be most effective and should be used if possible even when other articles and materials are included.

#### Where to Get Poster Material

Photographs, including snapshots, make good poster material - particularly if they are of local scenes and people. If you don't have them, maybe you can take some or borrow some from the families. Or there is always a chance you can get suitable ones from your Regional Information Adviser. Before you use any pictures of local people, or records of specific farms, be sure to get permission from the family.

The pictures, if possible, should show members of the family working at typical farm jobs. Or show them with livestock, farm machinery, crops, garden or poultry. One FSA office made a poster using only the picture of a supervisor and a borrower, with the supervisor examining corn in the borrower's field. Some ears of corn from the field were hung over the frame of the poster, with the words "FSA families grow their own livestock feed."

Instead of, or in addition to, actual photographs it is also possible to clip good pictures or illustrations - many in colors - from magazines, newspapers, booklets or pamphlets, old posters, or advertisements of different kinds. If you use ads, remember to remove or cover up the trade name or identifying title.

As for old posters, these offer useful raw materials because you can cut them up to get paste-on portions for new posters--or you can combine two or more to make others. Take a prepared poster and paste on charts or pictures to make it applicable to your own county. For instance, you can combine parts of two posters, add an enlarged picture of a local family, and write a caption or legend that tells the food production story of FSA families throughout that county. If you don't have posters of your own to work on, maybe you can get some from the local office of AAA, SCS, Extension Service, or some other agency. If you simply want heavy cardboard, you can doubtless get it at a local newspaper office or stationery store.



### How About Lettering?

Then comes the matter of lettering. Lettering isn't the bugaboo most supervisors believe. For one thing, the fewer words on a poster, the better. You want to keep the reading to the barest essentials and use as large lettering as you can. Of course the letters should be neat and legible--with plenty of clean, new, bright color if possible--but they don't have to be fancy. A supervisor with a good pair of scissors doesn't have to be an artist.

You can doubtless cut words or letters from ads in magazines, posters, newspaper headlines, or elsewhere. Then you can make up a number of various-sized alphabets so when you need them you'll have some on hand. If you don't care to clip letters or words from somewhere, try tracing them lightly with a pencil, then inking them in or coloring them. Just draw a few light pencil lines as guides, rough in the letters to get the spacing, and then use a free and easy stroke with a paint brush or pen. You will be surprised at your good results.

Local communities usually have numerous sources of talent and special facilities for getting art work done. Teachers of public school art classes, for example, may welcome the chance for their students to letter posters and do other art work. High schools, colleges, and other institutions have arts and craft classes and manual training shops where pupils may be glad to do entire posters according to your ideas and using your copy and pictures.

If you are your own craftsman, here are a few further tips: You can add color by cutting out strips, dots, dashes, squares, circles, etc. of color from pictures in magazines and other sources, and pasting them in corners, between pictures or illustrations, and elsewhere on posters. Colored scotch tape makes a good border and is easily applied if you can get it. If you can't get it, try cutting strips of colored paper and pasting them on in appropriate places.

### Other Ways to Prepare an Exhibit

Along the same line as posters are "clipping boards." For a clipping board, simply paste or thumb tack copies of published FSA stories - features, news, and favorable editorials - to a suitable backing. Printed items or stories about local people and local FSA activities are best. Give the names of your County FSA Committeemen a prominent place in your exhibit.

A large map of the county makes a good wall exhibit or background for your display. Mount it, or leave it unmounted if heavy enough, and spot the RR and FO families with different colored pins or colored circles or dots made with crayolas. In addition you could spot medical care groups, small cooperative services, etc. You might have narrow ribbon streamers or strings leading from each spot to the outside border where pictures, cards, charts, or legends gave relevant facts such as local figures, comparative records, and brief word explanations. Even if you didn't care to definitely mark FSA cases on the map, the map would still make a good background for an exhibit and for adapting other ideas.



Another possibility for a background would be to mount various FSA forms filled out for "Mr. and Mrs. John Doe," with typical data; over them you could fasten pictures taken in the county, including snapshots - and type or print a list of information about those phases of the FSA program. Charts make good background material but they should not be used alone. They are of most interest and value when used in connection with pictures, enlivening color, and the like. Copy for charts, legends, captions, etc. may include such information as number of FO and RR borrowers, increase in family's net worth or income, amount of loans made, improved farming practices, drawing of farm plans, comments or figures on program aims or results that affect the county, and indicators of family progress that make for a better community.

A display of record books, blank or filled in by some of FSA's best book-keepers, willing to show their work, could be used with an accompanying statement to tell their purpose and consistent use among FSA borrowers.

### Give People Something to Take Home

A display rack, bulletin board, or table should be on hand for holding FSA leaflets and pamphlets for distribution. Different pamphlets might be thumb-tacked in an interesting arrangement on a bulletin board - such as a diagonal, circle, or other grouping. Additional copies could be in a rack or on a nearby table to hand out to visitors.

If you think you will need more FSA leaflets, order them well in advance from the Regional Information Adviser so you can be sure to receive them in time. You can order ones of your own selection or write the regional office stating about how many you'll want, and the Information Adviser will make a selection based on the experience of your people at county fairs in your Region.

Among the give-away material, it would be a good idea to include a specially prepared summary of information - printed or mimeographed - about FSA work in your county. (A sample of this is on page 10.) If you are unable to work up a narrative summary, you could get together the facts and figures to be included, and send them to the Regional Information Adviser to put in shape.

### Making An Exhibit Look Interesting

Still other items may be used in an exhibit, depending on size and arrangement of space. The important thing is to decide what visual aids best tell the story. Models are good, if you have the time and inclination to make them. A model farmstead, for example, would make an ideal center of a booth, with canned food, homemade articles, and other things around it. Recently an associate supervisor in Oregon built a model small farm - complete with tiny animals - which has attracted much attention throughout her state and been on display in numerous places.

For most people, the real interest of an exhibit depends on the quality and variety of home-produced goods displayed. Use of some actual objects in an exhibit is desirable whenever possible. On the display shelves, put any appropriate materials your families are willing to loan. It's wise to begin collecting non-perishable items like canned goods several weeks in advance.



Other items to illustrate the homemaking phase of the program could be hand-work or handicraft, homemade soap, household articles from flour sacks, clothing from humble materials, cleverly remodeled garments, and fresh garden stuff. For a group service, you could show a pressure canner shared by a number of families, mentioning the number of families using it and the amount of fruit, vegetables and meat they have canned. You might also mention other group services in the county - such as farmers using machinery together. On the farm side, you could have samples of various products with the sign, "From a Diversified Farm" - maybe little piles of wheat or corn, dabs of cotton, a bottle of milk, miniature haystack, patch of green grass for pasture, several eggs, and so on.

Where possible, credit the families whose entries are on display. Have easy-to-read name tags for the canned food, garden stuff, home sewing, farm products, and so on - along with any explanations that may be typed or printed in India ink on small cards.

### Getting Down to Business

Arrange to include as many farm families as you can in preparing and presenting your exhibit. If you let it be the families' own display, they'll bring their friends, and their friends in turn will bring their friends to see it. Try to get pictures, or at least use names, of your county committeemen in a prominent place in the exhibit - with "credit lines" and a brief statement saying what FSA committees do and how they serve FSA in helping guide the local program.

In spite of all the local materials, pictures, products, etc. suggested, this doesn't mean to use them all at once. The original caution of keeping a presentation simple, and not creating a big hodgepodge still holds: Decide what you want to emphasize and then design your exhibit along lines to dramatize that one problem or accomplishment.

Before you start, know how much space you have - floor area, table area, and wall space - so you can divide it accordingly. You won't want to solicit or accept "entries" from families when you may later have to return them unused. Also consider conditions affecting the exhibit space - such as color of walls and floor, amount and direction of light, and general character of surroundings.

If you can conveniently and easily have a moving object in your exhibit - such as a small turntable with objects on it - or a flicker button to press, you will doubtless get more attention from passersby. Spots of light supplied by small flood lights or spot lights or hidden bulbs can brighten most exhibits. Usually avoid animations because they are hard to construct and keep in operation. A trick gadget or attention-getter isn't necessary anyway, because too often the trick device attracts attention to itself and gives you a competitor instead of an aid.

Plan to use your largest available poster, - or map, as background. Or use several posters in an attractive arrangement. Don't have posters or exhibits too high. The nearer they come to the eye level the more effective and the more certain you are that they can be studied without strain or undue effort.



The title of the exhibit should be an asset instead of just a label. Make it short and interesting. Usually place it at the top of the exhibit and in letters larger than the other reading matter so it can be seen at a distance. Sub-titles that develop the story of the exhibit should be as short as possible and full of vivid, terse expressions. The text or general reading matter also should be short and lettering large enough to read easily at the required distance.

If you have a booth, you can put a table in the center foreground, or a shelf across the front and bring your exhibit closer to the view of spectators. You may be able to borrow step-up shelves or display counters from a school shop or local store. And the school workshop may be able to furnish you a pair of energetic, bright boys with hammers and nails to help you put up the exhibit.

As for getting other help, preparing an exhibit calls for a number of workers - especially for the full cooperation of all FSA personnel in the county or district. Each should contribute ideas and be on the look-out for materials to use. Each in fact may be assigned a part in gathering materials for the exhibits - for bringing in suitable pictures from magazines or newspapers, and for doing other jobs. All contributions may be collected and kept until time for use.

Sometimes several county offices work together to plan and arrange an exhibit that they can exchange among themselves - use at their county fairs and for other purposes. Besides several FSA offices joining to make an exhibit, sometimes the FSA county office joins with other USDA agency people to prepare a group exhibit. This has the advantage of providing an opportunity to show the broader phases of the agricultural program - with each agency doing its particular job to fit into the larger, over-all picture.

At the fair, of course, you'll want somebody to stay at the exhibit to meet people, answer questions, explain and elaborate on facts brought out in the display, distribute circulars and leaflets, and discuss various phases of the work of FSA. Perhaps members of the office can take turns staying at the booth during peak attendance periods.

It might be a good idea to collect names of people who show special interest in the FSA program and would like to receive additional information. These requests can be made at the booth and, after the fair, a list can be sent to the State or regional office for follow-up.

Send the Regional Information Adviser a report of the Fair exhibit - what you did, interest shown by the public, and maybe one or more pictures of the display if you can get them.

#### Other Uses and Places for Exhibits

Most of what has been suggested for preparing a County Fair exhibit can be adapted for regional or state fairs, or for displays in store windows, FSA offices, meetings of different kinds, and elsewhere. To be specific:

The FSA office may be a good place. If your office happens to have a front window on the street level, you have a first class location for the display. Or you could have a small exhibit in your outer office or waiting room.



Try a store window. Often merchants have windows they don't use regularly for display purposes and would be willing to supply space for your exhibit. Many a merchant has found that this provides advertising and attention for his store, since the people who stop to look at the exhibit often step inside to ask questions and buy something. And along with window space in occupied stores, there's also the chance of using an empty store window in a vacant store - if the owner gives permission.

The court house lobby may usually be used by any Government agency to put up a display, and an exhibit there will be seen by many people who come and go.

Local theatres are sometimes willing to reserve space in their lobbies for exhibits of public interest.

Civic groups are always glad to promote worthy community programs and frequently welcome displays in their club rooms, on their display boards, or at their meetings.

Other Government agencies such as Extension Service, Triple-A, or farm groups such as the Farm Bureau, Grange, and Farmers' Union are generally glad to share window space they have procured.

Besides county fairs, there are many farm meetings or other type get-togethers where an exhibit could be set up and made worthwhile.

#### Give People a Chance to See Your Exhibit

No matter how good your display, it will never mean as much as it should, unless the maximum number of people see it. To insure the largest possible attention, there are at least two things you can do: One, prepare a news release for your local paper and radio station, describing it briefly and inviting the public to see it; two, send a note or postal card to some of your friends and community leaders inviting them to drop by.

The following is an example of such an "invitation," adaptable for either newspaper use or personal invitation.

"County supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ of the Farm Security Administration, announced an FSA exhibit now on display in the windows of \_\_\_\_\_ (or mention other location), and invites the people of \_\_\_\_\_ (town) \_\_\_\_\_ to see it.

"M \_\_\_\_\_ (supervisor) \_\_\_\_\_ says the display illustrates the work of FSA farm families in \_\_\_\_\_ county. (Change following paragraph to fit the particular exhibit on display.)

"It explains how families are "living at home" - growing the food they need for nutritious meals during the growing season, and canning or storing enough food to last them throughout the winter.



"Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said that the (no.) \_\_\_\_\_ FSA families here in \_\_\_\_\_ county canned an average of \_\_\_\_\_ quarts per person during the past season. FSA families are living better and eating better because they're learning to be self-sufficient on their farms.

(Or substitute the following for the two last paragraphs above:)

"Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said that the (no.) \_\_\_\_\_ families in \_\_\_\_\_ last year increased (or this year are increasing) their production of much needed foods by \_\_\_\_\_ percent." (Can substitute special items - eggs, milk, pork, chickens, soybeans, etc., if you can get figures.)

#### Local Interest in Local Affairs

Whether you prepare an exhibit for a county, state, or district fair, farmers' meeting, store window, your own office, or some other place, it will be an excellent idea to have a well-written summary of local FSA accomplishments on hand to distribute. You can do this yourself or, if necessary ask your Regional Information Adviser for assistance. If you must get the IF man's help, be sure to supply him all the facts when you write. Otherwise there'll be considerable delay in getting them by later correspondence. The summary can take the form of a one-page statement or a several-page mimeographed pamphlet with illustrations. In it you can highlight FSA work from its beginning in the county and trace it through the years to its present status. An opening sentence might read something like this:

"Since its beginning, FSA in \_\_\_\_\_ (county) \_\_\_\_\_ has been helping low-income farm families live better, farm better and contribute in a larger measure to the progress and prosperity of this community."

Then describe aims and achievements, explain improved farm practices recommended by FSA supervisors, and use figures, charts, and briefed case histories to illustrate farm families' progress. Point out or indicate the importance of supervision by giving, for example, the number of families in the county who now have pressure cookers, bigger and better farm gardens, culled poultry flocks, purebred sire service, and soil improvement programs. Where possible, point out definite ways FSA families have contributed to the community welfare and prosperity--examples such as helping establish a community canning center, assisting in organizing a purchasing and marketing association, reducing sickness through a medical care program, and the way families have increased their net worth.

Following is a suggestion of some of the information you would want to include in such a summary:

"FSA has made operating loans to 159 Hamilton County farm families to buy livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, and fertilizer since the program started in 1935. In the past nine years, it has loaned a total of more than \$95,600 and to date more than half of this has been repaid from farm income, even though much less than that had come due. Of the 159 borrowers, 86 have now paid their loans in full, while only two have been dropped for non-



payment of loans. Six of the loans were made to tenant farmers to help them buy farms, and all six are far ahead of scheduled repayments.

"Fred Browning of Norris City, who was formerly a tenant, has made such outstanding progress in improving his farm management practices that he was approved for a farm ownership loan last fall. Last year he got out a bumper crop of \_\_\_\_\_, in spite of floods that covered his farm. In three years as an FSA borrower he has increased his number of dairy cows from two to eight....."

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